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**Parks & Recreation**  
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# PRESS RELEASE

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## Parks and Recreation staff, volunteer receive statewide awards

Two local women were recognized this week by the Montana Trails, Recreation and Parks Association for their dedication to community parks and recreation programs.

Karen Sippy, Executive Director of the non-profit Trees for Missoula, received a Citation of Merit for outstanding volunteer services at the December 13 Missoula Parks and Recreation Board meeting. Sippy is also the treasurer of the Grant Creek Trail Association and a board member of Friends of Missoula Parks.

According to Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler, Sippy is a “passionate visionary who works tirelessly and with great joy to grow our future. Her contributions to Missoula’s Urban Forestry Program, the Grant Creek Trail, and to Friends of Missoula Parks will benefit generations of Missoulians.” Sippy’s efforts have led to more than \$20,000 in equipment donations city’s Urban Forestry program, over \$180,000 in matching funds raised for the Grant Creek Trail, and a new website with increased visibility for Friends of Missoula Parks. In addition, Sippy has dedicated countless volunteer hours assisting the Urban Forestry program and training new volunteers to plant and prune trees, Gaukler said.

Gretchen Sutherland, Youth Programs Coordinator with Missoula Parks and Recreation, was also honored at Tuesday’s meeting with a Citation of Merit for Innovative Programming. Sutherland, who has been with Parks and Recreation since 2012, coordinates the Kids in Action youth summer camps, afterschool programs, Jr. Playmakers youth sports leagues and the City of Missoula’s employee wellness program. Under Sutherland’s leadership, summer camp participation has grown by 72% percent over the last 5 years and Jr. Playmakers youth sport participation has increased by 37% over the last 3 years, says Recreation Supervisor Ryan Yearous. “Gretchen is a creative, versatile individual with a deep commitment to Missoula’s youth and our community’s health and wellness. She has a talent for developing unique programs to get local kids outdoors and engaged in active play,” he added.

The Montana Trails, Recreation and Park Association, an affiliate of the National Recreation & Park Association, is organization of over 120 trails, parks and recreation professionals dedicated to improving quality of life for all Montanans. Members come from most Montana cities and towns as well as the State of Montana, the U.S. Forest Service, the U. S. Bureau of Land Management, and the Montana University System. The association presents awards annually to recognize individuals, organizations and agencies for significant contributions to the parks and recreation profession.

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